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7 COMMENTS, AGENCY COORDINATION, & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

7.1 Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) have incorporated methods for conducting agency coordination and public involvement in the development of this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires agencies and the public be afforded early and continuing opportunities to be involved in the identification of social, economic and environmental impacts. Coordination follows the FHWA-Indiana *Division Streamlined Environmental Impact Statement Procedures*, September 2007. A formal Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was prepared at the initiation of this project and been updated as necessary.

This chapter presents the process used, identifies the engagement activities and summarizes the information presented and gathered related to agency coordination and public involvement.

7.2 Summary of Major Themes

Sections 7.3 and **Section 7.4** provide detailed summaries of agency and public engagement. These activities have identified recurring issues and concerns. The following subsections describe these major themes.

7.2.1 Wildlife and Natural Areas

The Study Area is largely rural and contains a substantial portion of the Hoosier National Forest. Tourism in the region accounts for a significant economic impact. Protecting the quality of the environment and the integrity of the natural areas was mentioned in most meetings. The rural nature of this region was viewed as part of the identity of many of the communities regardless of any economic value obtained through tourism. Stakeholders, the broader public and agencies each requested existing roadway corridors be used to the extent practical to limit habitat fragmentation and other impacts. Winding and narrow road networks in the region were regularly cited as limiting both commercial and tourism growth, but protecting natural areas remained a high priority. **Route M** and **Route O** both cross the acquisition boundary of the Hoosier National Forest. These routes were frequently cited as having the potential to impact wildlife and natural areas.

7.2.2 Access

Each alternative would modify the existing highway network. Residential and business owners throughout the Study Area are concerned that a new alignment and/or facility type would result in loss of access to either their properties or local roads they use regularly. The agricultural community is concerned that movement of farm equipment could be restricted on new roadways. The public and stakeholders throughout the Study Area requested a high level of engagement going forward regarding access restrictions.

7.2.3 Relocations

Residents across the Study Area are concerned about potential residential, commercial and industrial relocations. Also, the region has a high number of small family burial plots making potential relocation of cemeteries a significant



issue. Residents in several communities identified limited housing stock as a significant issue. Many noted builders are interested in higher end developments which do not address the need for middle- and lower-income housing. Taking of smaller/older housing stock could create issues with the availability of comparable housing. Amish residents would face additional hurdles in finding replacement housing given the need for homesteads and proximity to maintain community cohesion.

7.2.4 Agricultural

Maintaining access to agricultural properties is a major concern. Related concerns include impacts to farming operations by separation of farming infrastructure from agricultural fields and loss of multi-generational land. Alternatives with new alignment may split farms, produce uneconomical remnants and/or create adverse operational travel, which can be acutely impactful to Amish farmsteads. Impacts to farmland and farming operations were expressed as a high level of concern at each point of public engagement.

7.2.5 Economic Effects

Workforce shortage was one of the most common themes throughout the meetings with stakeholders, businesses and community leaders. Residents and businesspeople in Huntington, Jasper, French Lick, Paoli, Loogootee and Bedford all identified a consistent trend of migration out of the area and issues attracting young families into the area. Numerous factors cause this phenomenon. Residents recognize any build alternative would not address this issue on its own. However, modest reductions in travel time and an improved facility were perceived as attracting forces for residents and businesses. See **Appendix CC – Purpose and Need Appendix, Sections 4.2.2.4 and 4.2.2.5** for details of this input. Many stakeholders view improved north-south linkage as important to enhance the local and regional economy and to attract additional workforce. This linkage would provide more efficient commercial travel, as well as easier commuter access.

7.2.6 Consideration of No Build

NEPA requires a No-Build alternative be included at all stages of the study. The costs, impacts and benefits of all alternatives are measured against the No-Build alternative. Many public comments opposed the project and preferred the No-Build. The reasons offered for selecting the No-Build are summarized as:

- A build alternative would be an inappropriate use of tax funds.
- Impacts to the environment are not warranted by the proposed improvements.
- Public would receive a higher benefit through regular maintenance of the existing roads.
- A build alternative would change the rural nature of the region.

7.3 Public and Community Outreach

7.3.1 In-Person Outreach

Public engagement can take many forms. Providing in-person meetings where the public can speak directly with project representatives is a pillar of the NEPA process. Due to the scale of this project with a 12-county Study Area, in-person opportunities were provided over a wide geographic area. These were needed to provide adequate opportunities to learn about and comment on the project. There was additional flexibility to meet with groups at their request. Announcements were provided prior to all meetings through newspapers, television news stations, email notifications, text alerts, social media and the project website.

7.3.1.1 Stakeholder Meetings / Economic Development Interviews

Outreach to local businesses and communities began immediately following the initiation of the project. Meetings



were held with 18 stakeholders throughout the Study Area. These allowed the project team to gather input on a broad range of issues and concerns from these stakeholders during project scoping. The detailed meeting summaries may be found in **Appendix AA - Stakeholder Meetings and Correspondence**.

- **June 11, 2019: Dubois County Airport Authority (Huntingburg).** Airport Manager Travis McQueen identified the facility as publicly owned. It predominantly services commercial operations in the region. The airport provides an estimated regional economic impact of over \$500 million annually. Mr. McQueen has heard from airport users that they desire improved roadway connectivity to the north for shipping products.
- **June 11, 2019: Dubois Strong (Jasper).** President Ed Cole identified that about a third of the Dubois County workforce is in the manufacturing sector. Roadway connectivity is a significant issue both for employee commutes and materials logistics. US 231 north of Jasper is a logistical bottleneck.
- **June 12, 2019: Southern Indiana Development Corporation (SIDC) (Loogootee).** Executive Director Greg Jones and Program Specialist Rhonda Rumble stated that SIDC serves Daviess, Greene, Lawrence, Martin and Knox counties. It promotes regional quality of life, building regional collaboration and building regional assets. They noted that the construction of I-69 has resulted in some export of labor to Bloomington. They would like to see any alternative encourage growth within the counties and limit inter-regional competition for economic initiatives.
- **June 13, 2019: Mulzer Crushed Stone (Tell City).** President Ken Mulzer Jr. identified that most of his shipping is via barge rather than truck. While improved highway linkage would not necessarily impact his own business operations, he felt that existing roads limit economic growth in the region. There are transportation bottlenecks on US 231, especially near Jasper.
- **June 13, 2019: OFS Brands (Huntingburg).** President Hank Menke has actively supported transportation improvements in the region. He stated that the region lacks a good north-south connection with I-69.
- **June 13, 2019: Perry County Port Authority (Tell City).** Chief Executive Alvin Evans stated that the Port Authority serves Ohio River barge transportation. He did not believe highway linkage improvements would significantly impact the Port's operations. He noted that there is a substantial workforce issue, with more available jobs than workers. Workforce shortages are limiting capital investments and encouraging automation which may increase residential outmigration. Improved linkage to locations such as Bloomington may encourage families to live and work in the region but travel for 'city life' entertainment.
- **June 18, 2019: Boyd Grain Trucking (Washington).** President Tom Boyd and Farm Manager Trent Boyd stated they operate a fleet of 100 tractor trailers. They primary ship grain but do haul other products. Grain predominantly ships to the south and southeast. They did not think the project would significantly affect their operations.
- **June 18, 2019: Westgate Technology Park (Odon).** Purdue Foundry Director Jason Salstrom stated that his organization was founded to catalyze and support the Westgate Technology Park. It is located in Odon to take advantage of the Crane military facility and proximity to Bloomington. A goal is to draw young families to the area workforce. The proximity to Bloomington has been both a positive and negative. He believes the region needs improved local services for families to 'work and play' locally and should not need to travel elsewhere for entertainment.¹ Improved highway connections are needed to Jasper.
- **June 19, 2019: Glenmore Distillery (Owensboro).** Distribution Center Manager Jonathan Guillen and his assistant Amanda Clary stated their distillery ships to all 50 states and internationally. They had no specific opinions regarding the project. They noted more generally that shipping costs are reduced any time there are improved linkages.

1 See **Appendices CC – Purpose and Need and EE – Economic Impact** for details of interview statements.



- **June 19, 2019: Lincolnland Economic Development Corporation (Rockport).** Executive Director Tom Utter and his assistant Valerie Schmidt would support any build alternative. They see the need for improved north-south linkage from Rockport. Ultimately, they would like to see that linkage extend north to West Lafayette.
- **June 25, 2019: Cook Group (French Lick).** Chairman Steve Ferguson and Vice President Chuck Franz support the project due to the relative inaccessibility of the French Lick resort area. The Orange County population is projected to decline up to 10 percent over the next 30 years. This is in spite of strong employment opportunities at area resorts. Visitors to the area describe the roadways as dangerous. Flooding events routinely sever access on SR 56, US 50, US 150 and many county roads.
- **June 25, 2019: Elliot Stone (Bedford).** Treasurer Ralph Morgan stated that USDOT-required electronic logs for freight shipments has caused significant changes in logistics patterns. It has caused increased shipping costs to/from areas with poor access. The electronic logs have restricted truck travel. There are heavy fines to drivers for violations. Areas directly south or southeast of Bedford is one such shipping 'dead zone.' This limits some economic activity in the area.
- **June 25, 2019: Radius (Bedford).** President Jeff Quyle and Director of Crane Community Support Matt Craig stated that Radius was created by state legislation to support the region's economy. They serve Crawford, Washington, Orange, Lawrence, Martin, Greene, Dubois and Daviess counties. They are very interested in promoting improved transportation facilities. Currently, lack of adequate transportation limits economic growth and stability.
- **June 26, 2019: Farbest Foods, Wabash Valley Produce (Jasper).** Multiple executives and managers provided input. These included Ted Seger, Phil Seger and Ryan Downes from Farbest Foods, and Brad Schnarr and Andy Seger from Wabash Valley Produce. They stated that the effects on their businesses could be positive or negative. This depends on which route is chosen. They intentionally locate their facilities in remote areas. They view as undesirable any alignment proximate to their operations, especially one that limits access to county roads. However, improvements not immediately proximate to their facilities could be beneficial.
- **June 26, 2019: Jasper Engines (Jasper).** President Doug Bawel stated that the transportation improvement which would have the biggest positive impact to their operations would be improvements to SR 37 between SR 62 and I-64. He understands this is beyond the scope of the Mid-States project. He has suggested, an alignment west of Jasper connecting to I-69 near Petersburg. He also stated that his shipments avoid US 231 north of Jasper to Crane because of poor road conditions. This road is a bottleneck for the region.
- **June 26, 2019: Masterbrand Cabinets (Jasper).** Vice-President of Materials Todd Whalen and Vice-President of Logistics Matt Agler stated they use very little multimodal shipping. Nearly all shipping is via truck. They did not identify any specific transportation issues. Their biggest issue is workforce availability. Much of their workforce and the workforce of their shippers are over 55. They have difficulty retaining younger workers.
- **June 26, 2019: Meyer Distributing (Jasper).** CEO Jeff Braun and Vice-President of Strategic Initiatives and Logistics Matthew Schaick stated as an auto parts distributor, Meyer uses motor freight exclusively with a hub and spoke logistics model. Their major linkage issue is access via US 231 to both the north and south. These movements take more time than they should. The conceptual alternatives going north or east of Jasper could benefit their company. Workforce availability was one of their primary concerns. The bulk of their workforce is geographically south of Jasper. They commented that even a 10 minute improvement of time on a better facility could be an incentive to attract workers.
- **June 27, 2019: Daviess County Economic Development Corporation (Washington).** Executive Director Bryant stated that US 231 provides challenges to businesses on the eastern side of Dubois County. SR 257 connects Pike and Dubois counties. It is difficult for trucks to travel and has flooding issues. Lack of a labor force was one of the region's largest problems. There is a surplus of available jobs. This is partly due to lack



of lower-end single family homes. Low profit margins for constructing such facilities discourage builders (See **Appendix CC – Purpose and Need Appendix, Section 4.2.2.5**).

7.3.1.2 Stakeholder Meetings / Regional Issues Involvement Teams

Following the stakeholder interviews, four Regional Issues Involvement Teams (RIIT) were formed. Teams were formed for the Northeast, Northwest, North Central and South Central parts of the Study Area. Two rounds of RIIT meetings were held. The first round focused on introducing the project and the purpose and need. The second round focused on the alternative screening process. The detailed meeting summaries and presentation materials may be found in **Appendix AA – Stakeholder Meetings and Correspondence**.

- **July 9, 2019: Northeast RIIT Round #1(Paoli)**. This meeting was held at INDOT’s sub-District office in Paoli. Eight area stakeholders and five representatives from the project team attended. Primary considerations for conceptual alternatives include preserving the rural nature of the region, providing safe and convenient access to and from the facility, maintaining or increasing tourism in the area, avoiding impacts to the Hoosier National Forest, maintaining compatibility with Crane’s security needs and maintaining compatibility with the needs of the Amish communities. Considerations for Amish communities include accommodating horse and buggy travel and preserving the continuity of farmsteads. Primary purpose and need concerns included economic development, safety and congestion.
- **July 9, 2019: South Central RIIT Round #1 (Huntingburg)**. This meeting was held at the Huntingburg Event Center. Twenty-five area stakeholders and five representatives from the project team attended. Primary considerations for conceptual alternatives included ensuring access points, consideration of US 50 as an eastern alternative corridor, considering access points to Huntingburg other than SR 64 and eastern alternatives would interest only Perry County. Also, alternatives should minimize the use of eminent domain, impacts to natural resources, businesses and agribusiness. Primary issues associated with the Purpose and Need included economic development, linkage improvements, safety and congestion.
- **July 10, 2019: North Central RIIT Round #1 (Loogootee)**. This meeting was held at the Redemption Christian Church. Fifteen area stakeholders and five representatives from the project team attended. Primary considerations for conceptual alternatives included using the existing US 231 corridor to the extent practical, improving regional connectivity without drawing traffic from I-69 and maintaining alignments close to communities to provide access. Also, a western route would provide the least benefit to the area and limit impacts to areas deemed serene. Primary issues associated with the Purpose and Need included economic development, linkage improvements (including utilities), safety and congestion. It was noted that some in the community remain resentful of the right-of-way takes associated with the I-69 project.
- **July 10, 2019: Northwest RIIT Round #1 (Washington)**. This meeting was held at the Antioch Christian Church. Attendance included 11 area stakeholders and four representatives from the project team. Primary considerations for conceptual alternatives included considering using the US 50 eastern corridor along with SR 60, developing bypass options for French Lick and West Baden, upgrading SR 56 from French Lick to Haysville, upgrading SR 37 if eastern corridor is selected and use of SR 56 and SR 356. Primary issues associated with the Purpose and Need included economic development, linkage improvements to major markets south such as Nashville, safety and congestion.
- **February 11, 2020: Northeast RIIT Round #2 (Paoli)**. This meeting was held at the Paoli Community Center. Eighteen area stakeholders and six representatives from the project team attended. The screening process was presented. The Northeast RIIT was most interested in Alternatives M and O. Detailed discussions focused on these alternatives. The discussion focused on local resources and issues within these corridors.



- **February 11, 2020: South Central RIIT Round #2 (Huntingburg).** This meeting was held at the Huntingburg Event Center. Twenty-five area stakeholders and six representatives from the project team attended. The screening process was presented. The South Central RIIT was most interested in Alternatives B, C, M and O. The discussion focused on local resources and issues within these corridors.
- **February 12, 2020: North Central RIIT Round #2 (Loogootee).** This meeting was held at the Redemption Christian Church. Eleven area stakeholders and seven representatives from the project team attended. The North Central RIIT was most interested in Routes P and M. The discussion focused on local resources and issues within these corridors.
- **February 12, 2020: Northwest RIIT Round #2 (Washington).** This meeting was held at the Washington Community Center. Fourteen (14) area stakeholders and five representatives from the project team attended. The Northwest RIIT was most interested in Alternatives P, B and C. The discussion focused on local resources and issues within these corridors.

7.3.1.3 Public Informational Meetings

Two rounds of public meetings were held. The first round introduced the project and its Purpose and Need. The second round presented the alternative screening process. Both sets were held in three geographically dispersed locations. Presentation materials and comment forms are in **Appendix BB – Public Meetings and Correspondence**.

- **August 5, 2019: Round #1 (Washington).** A public meeting was held at the Washington High School. Eighty-three members of the public and 13 project representatives attended. Thirty comment forms were collected. The formal presentation was supplemented by map displays staffed with project representatives who could answer questions. The meeting introduced the public to the project, the draft Purpose and Need, and conceptual alternatives. Key issues raised at this location included promoting economic development, impacts to the Hoosier National Forest and improving travel safety.
- **August 6, 2019: Round #1 (French Lick).** A public meeting was held at the Springs Valley High School. One hundred twelve members of the public and 15 project representatives attended. Fifty-five comment forms were collected. The formal presentation was supplemented by map displays staffed with project representatives who could answer questions. The meeting introduced the public to the project, the draft Purpose and Need and conceptual alternatives. Key issues raised at this location included improving access for tourism, impacts to the Hoosier National Forest, maintaining access to local roads and impacts to private property.
- **August 8, 2019: Round #1 (Jasper).** A public meeting was held at the Jasper High School. Two hundred thirty-six members of the public and 19 project representatives attended. One hundred eleven comment forms were collected. The formal presentation was supplemented by map displays staffed with project representatives who could answer questions. The meeting introduced the public to the project, the draft Purpose and Need and conceptual alternatives. Key issues raised at this location included congestion relief, safety improvements around Jasper and Huntingburg, impacts to farms and residential properties, economic development and forest impacts.
- **February 18, 2020: Round #2 (Loogootee).** A public meeting was held at the Loogootee High School. Approximately 500 members of the public and 20 project representatives attended. Twelve comment forms were collected. The formal presentation was supplemented by map displays staffed with project representatives who could answer questions. The meeting provided the project status and presented the Screening of Alternatives. Key issues raised at this location included improving connectivity to Loogootee/ Martin County for promoting economic development, impacts to the Hoosier National Forest, impacts to private property and impacts to the Orange County Amish community.



- **February 19, 2020: Round #2 (Bedford).** A public meeting was held at the Bedford Middle School. One hundred fifty members of the public and 15 project representatives attended. Thirty-one comment forms were collected. The formal presentation was supplemented by map displays staffed with project representatives who could answer questions. The meeting provided the project status and presented the Screening of Alternatives. Key issues raised at this location included impacts to karst topography and the Hoosier National Forest, properties losing access, potential flooding and private property takes.
- **February 20, 2020: Round #2 (Jasper).** A public meeting was held at the Jasper Middle School. Approximately 600 members of the public and 20 project representatives attended. One hundred twelve comment forms were collected. The formal presentation was supplemented by map displays staffed with project representatives who could answer questions. The meeting provided the project status and presented the Screening of Alternatives. Key issues raised at this location included concerns that a new facility will trigger need for additional improvements to the local road network, impacts to businesses in Jasper and Huntingburg if traffic is diverted around the communities and impacts to private and commercial properties.
- **Meetings in a Box/Post Meeting Comment Forms Received.** In addition to accepting comment forms during each public meeting, members of the public could return comment forms electronically or through traditional mail to provide input. For those who could not attend the public meetings, 17 libraries hosted “Meetings in Box.” These included presentation packets and comment forms. The list of libraries and the information packets may be found in **Appendix BB – Public Meetings and Correspondence**. Eighty-two comments were received. Approximately an additional 2,600 electronic comment forms were received. During the first round of meetings the comment forms were not made available online and only a limited number of comments were received. During the second round the public was encouraged to comment online. This significantly increased responses. The comments generally were consistent with the issues expressed in-person at the meetings. These are summarized in Section 7.2.

7.3.1.4 Ad Hoc Meetings

Additional meetings were held with targeted stakeholders due to information gathered or meetings requested by groups within the Study Area. The project team sought to accommodate these requests and provide for expanded opportunities for the public and stakeholders to provide comments. Meeting summaries may be found in **Appendix AA – Stakeholder Meetings and Correspondence**. Below is a list of all additional meetings.

- November 1, 2019, February 7, 2020: Mid-States Regional Development Authority (Jasper)
- December 18, 2019: Washington Rotary Club (Washington)
- March 12, 2020: Orange and Lawrence counties Amish communities (Orange County)
- March 12, 2020: Mid-States Next Level Coalition (Huntingburg)
- March 17, 2020: Huntingburg Airport Development Plans (Huntingburg)
- March 18, 2020: Daviess and Martin counties Amish communities (Daviess County)
- March 19, 2020: Farbest Foods & Wabash Valley Produce (Jasper)
- June 30 & September 17, 2020: Davies Driven (Virtual)
- July 29 & August 13, 2020: Huntingburg Solar (Virtual)
- August 31, 2020: French Lick Parkway Coalition (Virtual)
- November 10, 2020: Jasper Multi-Modal Transportation Plan (Virtual)



7.3.2 Virtual Outreach

Public engagement was not limited to in-person meetings with fixed locations and dates. The project has a robust online presence to provide multiple platforms continuously available throughout the project. These provide information and allow comments to be submitted. These include a project website and social media channels. Also, traditional media outlets were monitored for project news to gather perspectives being shared among the public.

7.3.2.1 Project Website

The project website, www.MidStatesCorridor.com, launched July 2019 and is updated with project information and announcements at appropriate intervals. The website added on-site Spanish translations to visitors in spring 2021. ‘Digital dashboards’ are generated each month to provide the project team a consistent summary of website traffic and social media engagement. These dashboards summarize information such as the number of page visits in that month, average time users spent on the site and type of device used to access. The inset is a snapshot of one part of the dashboard. Copies of the digital dashboards are included in the project record.

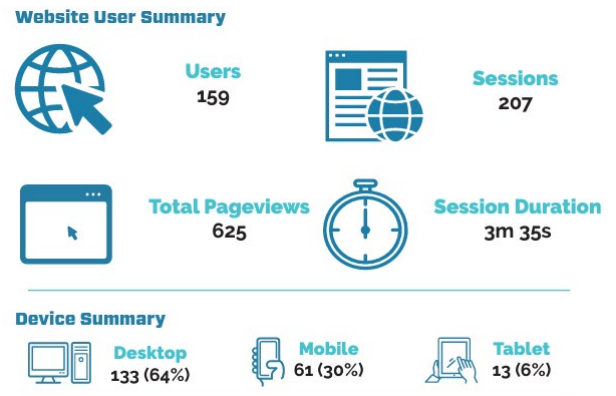


Figure 7-1: Sample of Digital Dashboard

Key Website Pages:

- **Project Overview.** Information includes a project summary, key points about the Mid-States Corridor and answers to frequently asked questions.
- **Public Meetings and Outreach.** Pages include a summary of public outreach efforts over the course of the project, public information meeting materials, information about the Regional Issues Involvement Teams (RIITs) and summaries for all meetings.
- **Project Documents.** Downloadable project documents in PDF format include the Screening of Alternatives report, Public Involvement Plan, Coordination Plan, Purpose and Need Statement, Environmental Justice Outreach Plan and background documents and maps.
- **Project Maps.** High-resolution project maps are available for download. These include the alternatives carried forward in the Screening of Alternatives.
- **News & Events.** News releases, including public meeting information and project updates, are posted.
- **Photos & Videos.** A playlist containing a variety of informational project videos and photo albums with images from public meetings is included.
- **Contact Us.** Information includes pages dedicated to comments and questions, details about the project office and contact information for the project team.

7.3.2.2 Social Media

A Facebook and Twitter account were created for the Mid-States Corridor project and are updated with the project information. Posts focus on project information, ways to follow progress, contact channels and next steps. More than 250 comments were received through the Facebook account; all comments received through these formats are logged for the project record. Comments with specific questions such as inquiries into the number or dates of future meetings were responded to. The project accounts are:

- [Facebook.com/MidStatesCorridor](https://www.facebook.com/MidStatesCorridor)



Figure 7-2: Image of Twitter Handle



Figure 7-3: Image of Facebook Page

- [Twitter.com/MidStatesStudy](https://twitter.com/MidStatesStudy)

7.3.2.3 Traditional Media

Traditional media such as newspapers and local television news were monitored for articles, stories, opinion pieces and letters to the editor which referenced the Mid-States Corridor Project. These articles were collected for the project record. Approximately 475 media mentions were captured between July 2019 and September 2021, **Appendix II – Media Outreach** lists sources and publication dates. Notices for activities such as public informational meetings and notice of availability of project materials at area libraries were provided in local newspapers.

Although mentioned in a broader context for the state of Indiana’s commitment to infrastructure projects, on June 11, 2021, Governor Eric J. Holcomb, at a chamber event in Southwest Indiana, announced support for three transportation projects. One of the three projects included a statement for the investment of \$75 million for design and construction of added travel lanes, passing lanes and intersection improvements at strategic locations on US 231. These were identified as focusing on improvements to reduce congestion in the Jasper and Huntingburg areas and improve safety and mobility throughout the approximately 48-mile corridor from I-64 to I-69. This announcement was done independent of the formal public outreach specific to the Mid-States Corridor project. However, this action generated additional interest in the project as part of the highlight for anticipated activities in the corridor.

7.3.3 Project Office

A dedicated project office was established to offer the public additional opportunities to provide input. The office was opened Monday July 15, 2019 in Room 216 of the Administration Building at the Jasper Campus of Vincennes University. General office hours were 8:00am to 5:00pm Eastern Time on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Meetings could be scheduled at other times by appointment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the office was temporarily closed on March 23, 2020. On February 1, 2021 the office was reopened, but visits were by appointment only.

7.3.3.1 Visits

The project office has had 83 visitors between July 15, 2019 and September 1, 2021. Two surges of visitors coincided with the two rounds of public informational meetings. Visitors typically were interested in looking more closely at maps and asking questions about potential impacts to properties or businesses. Concerns over impacts to farming operations were a primary topic.



7.3.3.2 Contacts

Phone inquiries, emails and letters were directed to the project office. Between July 15, 2019 and September 1, 2021 there were 128 phone inquiries, 272 emails and 59 letters/returned comment forms received at the project office.

7.4 Agency Review and Coordination

The Notice of Intent (NOI) for the project was published in the Federal Register on July 5, 2019. This initiated the Mid-States Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in compliance with Title 23 USC Section 139. Participating agencies were identified following the NOI. A participating agency includes any tribal, local, state or federal agencies that may have an interest in the project. Formal invitations were provided to the agencies. All federal agencies invited are designated as participating agencies unless that agency declines. To decline, they must state they have no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project, they have no expertise or information relevant to the project and do not intend to submit comments on the project.

A participating agency may also be designated as a cooperating agency. A cooperating agency has a higher degree of authority, responsibility and involvement in the environmental review process. Participating agencies designated as cooperating agencies are typically other federal agencies that have specialized expertise and/or may have other involvement such as permitting or authorization authority. They can be state, local or tribal agencies. **Table 7-1** Identifies the Mid-States EIS participating and cooperative agencies.

Participating agencies formally identify issues of concern in the EIS scoping process. They provide input on the Purpose and Need, the range of alternatives, the screening of alternatives and adequacy of the analysis. These agency meetings and correspondence occurred during the development of this Tier 1 DEIS.

7.4.1 Agency Coordination Meetings

- **July 3, 2019: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.** A meeting was held at the USFWS Bloomington Field Office. Several representatives from INDOT and USFWS attended. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project to the USFWS, seek early scoping issues related to threatened and endangered species and develop general consultation expectations for the tiered approach of the study. A full meeting summary may be found in **Appendix Z – Agency Meetings and Correspondence**.
- **August 5, 2019: Early Coordination Letter.** A formal Early Coordination Letter was sent to the following entities. The letter may be found in **Appendix Z – Agency Meetings and Correspondence**:
 - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - U.S. Forest Service - Hoosier National Forest
 - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [Louisville District]
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [Region 5]
 - U.S. Coast Guard [Eighth District]
 - U.S. Department of the Interior - Office of Environmental Policy
 - National Park Service [Midwest]
 - Federal Aviation Administration [Great Lakes Region]

Draft Environmental Impact Statement



**MID-STATES
CORRIDOR**

Invited Agency	Participating	Cooperating
Federal Agencies		
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	X	X
U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service	X	
U.S. Forest Service - Hoosier National Forest	X	
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	X	
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [Louisville District]	X	
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [Region 5]	X	
U.S. Coast Guard [Eighth District]	X	
U.S. Department of the Interior - Office of Environmental Policy	X	
Federal Aviation Administration [Great Lakes Region]	X	
National Park Service [Midwest]	X	
State Agencies		
Indiana Department of Natural Resources	X	
Indiana Department of Environmental Management	X	
Indiana Geologic Survey	X	
Local Agencies		
Evansville Metropolitan Planning Organization	X	
Bloomington/Monroe County Metropolitan Planning Organization	X	
Tribal Entities		
Miami Tribe of Oklahoma	X	

Table 7-1: Mid-States Participating and Cooperating Agencies

- Federal Highway Administration
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources [Director]
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Division of Fish & Wildlife
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Division of Water
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Division of Oil & Gas
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management [Director]
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management – Office of Water Quality, Surface Water
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management – Office of Water Quality, Drinking Water
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management – Office of Air Quality
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management – Office of Land Quality
- Indiana Department of Environmental Management – Groundwater Section
- Indiana Geologic & Water Survey
- Indiana Department of Transportation – Environmental Services Division
- Indiana Department of Transportation – Multimodal Planning and Programs Division



- Indiana Department of Transportation – Cultural Resources Office
- Evansville Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Bloomington/Monroe County Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Mid-States Corridor Regional Development Authority
- Miami Tribe of Oklahoma
- **August 20, 2019: Agency Scoping Meeting.** An agency scoping meeting was held on the Jasper Campus of Vincennes University. Representatives from FHWA, INDOT, USFWS, USEPA, USFS (Hoosier National Forest), USACE, IDEM, IGWS, IDNR, FAA, Huntingburg Airport, Delaware Nation, Mid-States Regional Development Authority (RDA) and Evansville MPO attended. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the project milestones, Purpose and Need, potential preliminary alternatives, preliminary alternative screening, preliminary input from recent stakeholder and public meetings and invitations to be participating and cooperating agencies. A full meeting summary may be found in **Appendix Z – Agency Meetings and Correspondence**.
- **December 12, 2019: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.** A meeting was held at the USFWS Bloomington Field Office. Representatives from FHWA, INDOT and USFWS attended. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss appropriate levels of Section 7 coordination and consultation at the Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels of the project. The agencies agreed to engage in formal consultation in Tier 1 which will require a Biological Assessment (BA) and Biological Opinion (BO) included in the FEIS. A full meeting summary may be found in **Appendix Z – Agency Meetings and Correspondence**.
- **March 3, 2020: Screening of Alternatives.** A meeting was held on the Jasper Campus of Vincennes University. Representatives from FHWA, INDOT, USFWS, USEPA, USFS (Hoosier National Forest), USACE, IDEM, IGS, IDNR, FAA, RDA, Pokagon Tribal HPO and Miami Tribe attended. The purpose of the meeting was to present the alternatives screening process and the alternatives recommended to be carried forward for further study. A full meeting summary may be found in **Appendix Z – Agency Meetings and Correspondence**.
- **March 4, 2020: Agency Bus Tour.** A bus tour was held the day following the screening of alternatives meeting for participants in the previous day’s meeting. The tour left from Vincennes University to observe areas associated with the corridors of Section 2 and Alternatives C, M and O in Section 3. Keys stops included Huntingburg Lake, East Fork of the White River, Glendale Fish and Wildlife Area, Orangeville Rise and Buffalo Flats. The tour pamphlet may be found in **Appendix Z – Agency Meetings and Correspondence**.

7.4.2 Agency Correspondence.

- **July 29, 2019: U.S. Department of Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service (email).** Robin McWilliams acknowledged receipt of the notice of intent and USFWS intent to begin coordination with INDOT.
- **August 6, 2019: INDOT, Office of Aviation (email).** Chief Airport Inspector Julian Courtade from INDOT’s Office of Aviation provided guidance on construction of structures near airport facilities. Two recommendations were provided: (1) obstructions within a 5 nm radius of a public use airport must not exceed a 100:1 slope to the nearest point of the runway; and (2) it is recommended to contact the airport owner of any private air facilities to notify them of any nearby obstructions. A permit would only be required from his office for public use airports.
- **August 22, 2019: Indiana Geological & Water Survey (email).** Todd Thompson from IGWS responded to accept IGWS’s being a participating agency on the project.
- **August 23, 2019: Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil & Gas (email).** Orphan Well



Manager Brian Royer from IDNR's Division of Oil & Gas notified the study team there are numerous old oil and gas wells located in the Huntingburg and Jasper area. The largest concentrations are southwest of Huntingburg. He provided additional information on well density. He stated that as more detailed information became available regarding alternatives, more specific information could be provided.

- **September 3, 2019: Miami Tribe of Oklahoma (letter).** Tribal Historic Preservation Office Diane Hunter stated the tribe will act as a participating agency and held no objection to the project at this time.
- **September 9, 2019: Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Office of Land Quality (email).** Lynette Schrowe acknowledged the department has no additional comments and requested the agency be included as a participating agency.
- **September 10, 2019: Indiana Department of Natural Resources (letter).** Beth McCord, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer in IDNR's Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology stated her agency will provide multiple points of contact due to the scale of the project. The agency had no specific comments to the Purpose and Need, preliminary alternatives or summary of the August agency meeting.
- **September 10, 2019: U.S. Department of Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service (letter).** Scott Pruitt from USFWS accepted a role as a cooperating agency. Additional comment regarding the Purpose and Need were included. It was noted an EIS of a previous similar project was withdrawn due to a reevaluation of traffic data. The agency requested further clarification in the purpose and need as to how current data supports the need. The agency specified it does not support any alternative east of existing US 231 due to concerns regarding karst areas, water quality, protected species/habitat and public lands.
- **September 11, 2019: Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Office of Water Quality (letter).** Alisha Turnbow from the Groundwater Section stated that the project area is not located in a wellhead protection area but is within four source water assessment areas for public water supply systems.
- **September 12, 2019: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (letter).** District Ranger Michelle Paduanai accepted the invitation for the Hoosier National Forest to act as a participating agency. It was also noted that any alternative within the National Forest System (NFS) would need to be reviewed by the agency for consistency with its Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). Any alternative which required right-of-way from the NFS will require INDOT to request a Federal Land Transfer through FHWA.
- **September 12, 2019: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (letter).** Deputy Multi-Media Office Director Kenneth Westlake provided comments on the Purpose and Need and potential preliminary alternatives. The agency provided three recommendations on the Purpose and Need. These include: (1) clarify terminology used in reference to the Study Area; (2) clarify why Goal 3 – Reduction in localized congestion within Dubois County is not a core goal, and; (3) further evaluation of how the completed I-69 project will affect the Purpose and Need goals related to accessibility, travel time and safety. He recommended presenting an alternative or combination of alternatives which improve the existing roadway network. He also recommended eliminating alternatives which do not substantially follow existing roadway corridors.
- **September 12, 2019: Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Office of Water Quality (letter).** Surface Water, Operations and Enforcement Branch Chief Brian Wolff provided four comments, these include: (1) the agency was unclear as to the purpose of the project; (2) Section 1 has several compensatory mitigation sites adjacent to US 231; (3) the agency prefers alternatives using existing roadway corridors and (4) the agency prefers alternatives which remain on or to the west of US 231 due to environmentally sensitive karst areas to the east.
- **September 12, 2019: Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife (letter).** Environmental Supervisor Matthew Buffington provided an assessment of regulatory requirements if the



project progresses forward, a list of managed lands and species the department expects would be avoided or impacts minimized and comments related to the agencies position on the proposed alternative alignments.

- **September 13, 2019: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (letter).** Kenneth Westlake accepted participating agency status for USEPA. He also asked that any information regarding meetings or conference calls be received at least two weeks in advance.
- **February 24, 2020: INDOT, Multimodal Planning and Programs (email).** INDOT Chief Airport Engineer Michael Buening wrote that the Huntingburg Airport is extending its runway to the east approximately 500 feet. This also will extend the runway protection zone. A map of the extension project was provided for use to avoid potential conflicts with any proposed alternatives.
- **February 26, 2020: Indiana Department of Natural Resources (letter).** Beth McCord, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer in IDNR's Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology, identified their staff would attend the March 3, 2020 agency partnering meeting remotely and requested hard copies of materials be sent to the agency.
- **March 11, 2020: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (email).** Michelle Paduani provided information related to the agency's management areas.
- **March 17, 2020: Indiana Landmarks (letter).** Community Specialist Joshua Biggs commented on the screening report with concern that the action has the potential to have adverse effects to historic resources.
- **March 18, 2020: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (letter).** Deputy Director Kenneth Westlake provided recommendations to the alternatives in the screening report. These included carrying forward western and eastern corridor variations around Jasper/Huntingburg and to not carry forward the Northeast Family of alternatives.
- **March 20, 2020: Indiana Landmarks (letter).** Director of the Southern Regional Office Gregory Sekula commented on the screening report and that the agency would not be able to offer a ranking of preference based on the scale and lack of detail of the project at this time.
- **March 23, 2020: U.S. Department of Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service (letter).** Scott Pruitt provided recommendations from review of the screening report. These included Alternatives M and O be removed from consideration and to carry forward a western and eastern option for the Jasper/Huntingburg bypass. An additional list of species that may be listed within the next five years was also provided.
- **March 27, 2020: Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife (letter).** Environmental Supervisor Matthew Buffington provided an additional list of species and an assessment of the alternatives proposed. The letter requested to remove from consideration Alternatives M and O.
- **April 3, 2020: Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Office of Water Quality (email).** Samuel Blazey, Section Chief of the Groundwater Section, responded that the agency has no additional comments from their September 9, 2019 letter.
- **April 15, 2020: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (email).** USACE Project Manager Deborah Snyder commented that the Northeast family of alternatives would not be acceptable as the least environmentally damaging practical alternative as required by Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act.
- **April 15, 2020: City of Bloomington Planning and Transportation Department (email).** Senior Transportation Planner Patrick Martin responded to the screening report meeting summary with concurrence of Deborah Snyders's comments expressed at the meeting.
- **April 17, 2020: Federal Aviation Administration (email).** Bobb Beauchamp identified the FAA's concerns are



limited to the area adjacent to the Huntingburg Airport.

- **October 28, 2020: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (email).** USACE Project Manager Deborah Snyder accepted participating agency status for her agency.